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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT FRIDAY, February 9, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "WHY WE EAT". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Ever since I got my copy of the new Yearbook of Agriculture--I've been wondering how many of you have seen this big, thick book called "Food and Life." It's full of fascinating stories that explain why we eat.

In fact, this book has so many interesting pointers about food values and the importance of a well-balanced diet--that I've decided to tell you about some of the especially good things I've gleaned from it.

So--beginning today--we'll have a regular series of broadcasts based on articles written for this yearbook by women in the Federal Bureau of Home Economics.

Just thinking about all the recent advances in the field of nutrition makes me believe that the modern cook probably knows a great deal more about food than her grandmother. Yes, I know, grandmother turned out some mighty fine meals from her store of tried-and-true recipes. But don't forget that cooks today have the advantage of being able to learn what scientists all over the world have discovered about food values. So that makes the modern cook sort of an "engineer" who understands how the food is used--in making the body function as it should.

You cooks today know the energy foods--the mineral foods--and the protein foods from memory...and you can recite the vitamin alphabet backwards and forwards. So I think it's pretty safe to say that you know more about food than your grandmothers, who justly prided themselves on being good cooks.

For example -- Grandmother probably never heard of calories. Of course, she did know that folks had to eat if they wanted to live and work and keep warm.

But now we know that the energy for these purposes comes from the fats--and the carbohydrates--and the proteins of the diet. These are burned in the body. That is--they're burned in a chemical sense. (Of course, there's no flame or smoke.) But the "burning" does produce heat energy. And it's this heat energy that supplies the body with the fuel for keeping warm--for using the muscles in work and play--and even for the important functions that go on inside the body.

Something else that grandmother didn't know about is the importance of protein foods--such as milk and eggs. Today we know that protein is used to build a large part of the soft tissue in children's bodies. And grown folks also need protein foods to repair the wear-and-tear on these same tissues.

And in grandmother's time, there were a lot of cooks who threw their vitamins and minerals down the kitchen drain--when they threw away the liquid from cooked or canned vegetables. Of course, the Southern mammies used this "pot likker" (as they called it). They noticed that it helped children to grow. But, of course, calcium and iron and vitamins were far beyond their understanding--as they were for most of us, until recently.

Now nutritionists have shown the importance of cooking foods so as to save the minerals and vitamins. And they've also explained how important these minerals and vitamins are for good health.

Already there's quite a long list of minerals that we know are necessary. And this list seems to be growing longer all the time. Some of these minerals are needed only in very small amounts. Some of the others are needed in larger quantities and are given more attention. Three of these are calcium--phosphorus--and iron. And each one of these is absolutely necessary for good nutrition.

The calcium and the phosphorus work together in forming bones and teeth. But some of the calcium also stays in the blood stream and is needed there for the proper working of the heart--and for the coagulation of the blood. Some of the

phosphorus also takes part in a good many of the chemical processes of the body.

Then there's iron that you associate with good, red blood. It's used in the form of hemoglobin of the blood. And it's this hemoglobin that keeps the fire of life burning in our bodies. As Gove Hambidge, Editor of the Yearbook, says, "When you don't get enough iron, the effect is a little like cutting down the draft of a furnace."

Finally there are the vitamins. And surely grandmother never dreamed that food contained such important substances. So far, the scientists definitely know about eight vitamins. But they expect that they will soon know about more.

Four of these vitamins--A, B_1, C. and D--are the ones most widely known. And if you choose foods to furnish these--in plentiful amounts--there's little danger that there will be a shortage of the others.

Let's run over these vitamins quickly and see what they do in our bodies...

First, there's vitamin A. It has a lot to do with a healthy condition of the cells--in the surface layers of the skin, and in the mucous membranes inside the body. And these cells have to be in good condition. If there's something wrong with them--the body doesn't have its normal protective barrier against certain kinds of infection.

Vitamin B_1 is necessary for keeping the nervous system in a normal and healthy condition. It's also needed for your body to obtain the energy value that's in the sugar and starches you eat.

Vitamin C is like the others...that is, it's needed for all-round good health. But this vitamin is especially important for the health of your gums and the soundness of your teeth and bones.

And then there's vitamin D--the "sunshine" vitamin. It's special job is to help phosphorus and calcium in forming bones and teeth. Vitamin D is especially important for children who are rapidly developing new bones and teeth.

So ends our introduction to this series of broadcasts on why we eat. But there'll be more material from the Yearbook of Agriculture in the weeks to come.

And if you'd like to find out for yourself about these new developments in nutrition--you can get a copy of the 1939 Yearbook of Agriculture by sending $1.50 to the Superintendent of Documents in Washington, D. C. Simply ask for the latest Yearbook of Agriculture--or mention it by its name, "Food and Life." Remember the price if $1.50

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